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Ex-CIA Analyst Disputes U.S. Aides on Nicaragua

By Don Oberdorfer
and John M. Goshko
Washington Post Staff Writers

A former CIA analyst charged yesterday that the Reagan administration is misleading Congress and the public about Nicaraguan activity in El Salvador. He was contradicted immediately by Secretary of State George P. Shultz and CIA Director William J. Casey.

David C. MacMichael, who worked on Central American intelligence estimates as a CIA contract employe from 1981 to 1983, said the administration lacks credible evidence of a substantial flow of arms from Nicaragua to El Salvadoran guerrillas since the spring of 1981.

The existence of a continuing cross-border flow of arms, which President Reagan described last month as "a flood" of Soviet weaponry, has been a central feature of the justification for the U.S. "secret war" against the Nicaraguan government that began late in 1981.

MacMichael said he questioned the lack of recent intelligence to back up U.S. claims of a massive Nicaragua-to-El Salvador arms flow during an interagency meeting in September, 1981, and in subsequent memoranda to his superiors at the CIA.

In an interview with The Washington Post, MacMichael said that

although he had a top-secret clearance and other authorizations to see highly confidential data, colleagues and senior officials of the agency could produce only vague and outdated responses to his questions.

Rather than showing communist origins or Nicaraguan complicity, MacMichael said, weapons captured from Salvadoran guerrillas "in the last year or so have originated with Salvadoran government sources."

Shultz, questioned at a luncheon meeting with diplomatic correspondents, said, "It is inconceivable that an informed, honest person" could deny the arms supply from Nicaragua to El Salvadoran guerrillas. "The evidence is everywhere. I've looked at a lot of it and I think it is totally and absolutely convincing that the direction and the supply of the guerrillas in El Salvador comes from Nicaragua."

At another point Shultz expressed astonishment at being questioned so persistently on this point, and suggested that MacMichael "must be living in some other world."

Casey told an American Stock Exchange meeting here, in response to a question, that MacMichael's charges were "just one man's opinion." Casey acknowledged that MacMichael had been a contract employe of the CIA but insisted "there is ample evidence" that "the activities and the ability of the guerrillas in El Salvador to threaten the Salvadoran government springs in large

measure from the support that is provided them from Nicaragua, Cuba and so on."

Neither Shultz nor Casey provided evidence to refute MacMichael's challenge. The State Department, which has been asked repeatedly by reporters in recent months to make public its evidence that the illicit arms are flowing, has not provided such information.

Shultz said publication of another administration "White Paper" on external support for the El Salvador guerrillas is not being planned but that "I'll go back and examine the issue" of making public the administration's data.

MacMichael, 56, said he joined the CIA in March, 1981, under a two-year contract to be an "estimates officer" for the National Intelligence Council, which produces national and interagency intelligence estimates, and that he spent more than half his time on Central America.

His contract was not renewed when it ran out last March. MacMichael, an ex-Marine with experience as an analyst in Southeast Asia, said a superior told him he was "not a match" with the CIA.

After leaving CIA employ, he made trips to Nicaragua in August-September, 1983, and March-April, 1984, "to see for myself" because he was bothered by the lack of information within the government and a seeming lack of interest in finding out, MacMichael said.